

Montana Council on Homelessness

January 2006 | MTCoH e-News Update

“Clearly, there are a thousand and one scenarios for how someone can slip through the cracks. I'll walk down the street and see a homeless person, and I'll want to stop them and say, *How did this happen?*” – William Baldwin

An unprecedented number of people are now affected by homelessness in America: Over 3.5 million people are likely to experience homelessness this year. Of these, 39% are children. Among homeless adults, 42% are employed, and 40% of the male homeless populations are U.S. veterans. The shortage of affordable housing and the increasing rate of poverty are the greatest contributors to homelessness. Right now, working full time for minimum wage is not enough to afford an apartment at Fair Market Rent anywhere in the nation. (National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness: www.npach.org)

– *We are living in the wealthiest country in the world, and yet we look past homelessness every day. Homelessness is not acceptable. It is not something to manage, it is something we must end.*

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Montana Continuum of Care awarded \$2.415 million

December 23, 2005: The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced that Montana would receive \$2,415,116 to fund a record number of state and local homeless shelters and services through its Continuum of Care and Emergency Shelter Grants programs.. The announcements were made 12/23/2005. The Montana funds encompass 18 awards, in amounts ranging from \$16,800 to nearly half a million dollars. Continuum of Care programs provide permanent and transitional housing, as

well as job training, health care, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment and child care. Nationally, half of the \$1.2 billion in Continuum of Care grants go to help pay rent and provide permanent housing for disabled homeless individuals and their families. Emergency Shelter Grants fund homeless shelters, homeless prevention programs and social services such as job training, health care, alcohol or other drug treatment and child care. For more information, contact Bob Buzzas, Continuum of Care Coordinator at civicconsulting@msn.com.

MTCoH News

- **Policy Academy #9: Homeless Families with Children & Unaccompanied Youth November 1 – 3**

Homelessness among families and unaccompanied youth are growing problems in Montana. Montana was invited to send a team to the final national Policy Academy on Homelessness: *Families with Children Experiencing Homelessness* November 1- 3 in Anaheim, California. The team included nine Council and/or Council workgroup members and other professionals working directly with homeless families or youth. The Policy Academy Team will function as the Montana Council on Homelessness workgroup around this family homelessness. The team's work is consistent with that already accomplished by the Council, and will be integrated into the MTCoH plan to end homelessness in Montana by 2014.

- **Billings Strategic Planning Event: November 14 – 15**

The Montana Council on Homelessness and the City of Billings have agreed to partner in a demonstration project around addressing local homelessness. With 807 unduplicated homeless individuals identified, Billings had the largest documented homeless population during the January 2005 survey of the homeless sponsored by the Intergovernmental Human Services Bureau. Billings also has many services and resources available. Approximately 60 people came together at this two-day event held at the Mansfield Center, and together identified the issues, obstacles and some of the strategies needed to address homelessness. This work will be incorporated in a city plan to end homelessness. More information is available on the MTCoH website at www.MTCoH.org.

- **SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach & Recovery) Train-the-Trainer Event: December 4 – 8**

Montana was one of 14 sites chosen to participate in the SOAR technical assistance initiative designed to increase the number of homeless people receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Three people – Marcia Armstrong of the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division, Michelle Thibodeau, Disability Determination Services Bureau Chief, and Sherrie Downing, Montana Council on Homelessness Coordinator, participated in the train-the-trainer event held in Arlington, Virginia. All three will be able to provide the Stepping Stones to Recovery training to front-line workers in order to improve access to these crucial benefits for homeless people.

- **SOAR Strategic Planning Process: December 12 – 13**

SOAR experts, Yvonne Perret and Jim Wuelfing, facilitated a strategic planning process designed to increase collaboration around improving access to SSI/SSDI at the State and community levels. This event was held in Billings at the Yellowstone City-County Health Department. The next step will be to provide the Stepping Stones to Recovery training to as many as 30 front-line workers from Billings and elsewhere. The progress of

this effort will be carefully evaluated, and will have the benefit of additional technical assistance throughout the next year.

For more information, visit the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, and Recovery) webpage located at www.pathprogram.samhsa.gov/SOAR. The website contains several new resources for case managers and others assisting homeless people to apply for Social Security disability benefits (Supplemental Security Income – SSI; and Social Security Disability Insurance – SSDI).

- Do you need this training? Contact Sherrie Downing at Sherrie@MTCoh.org, Marcia Armstrong at MArmstrong@mt.gov, or Michelle Thibodeau at MThibodeau@mt.gov.
- [Marcial Ornales, MTCoh VISTA](#), will complete his term January 21st. We appreciate his enthusiasm and hard work during the past year, and wish him well as he moves into the next phase of his adventure.

Montana News

- [December 21, 2005: Remembering those who have died in homelessness](#)
The National Coalition for the Homeless, along with the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, designated December 21 as a day to remember the country's estimated 3.5 million homeless people and those who have died among them.

- ◆ [Billings](#)

About a dozen people stood outside of the Yellowstone County Courthouse on Tuesday, singing carols and lighting candles. They gathered to remember those who've died of exposure or as a result of homelessness as part of Homeless Persons' Memorial Day. People from groups such as Healthcare for the Homeless, the local chapter of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Montana Rescue Mission and city and county officials were present at the memorial. They tried to light candles for a vigil, but a breeze kept blowing them out. Clarence Salley of Healthcare for the Homeless says it was fitting because the candles represent how fragile life is on the streets.

- ◆ [Helena](#)

Helena joined 125 other cities across the country Wednesday in adopting National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day. A memorial ceremony included a letter from Governor Brian Schweitzer and a proclamation from the Lewis and Clark County Commission. On the Capitol steps, Helen Amundson, operations manager of the Cooperative Health Center, said Helena — like many Montana cities — has a homeless problem that few are even aware of. Amundson said it's hard to place a specific number on Helena's homeless population. Montana's annual Survey of the Homeless found nearly 3,000 people homeless in Montana the night of January 27, 2005.

- [More Home Heat Aid](#)

"This is a great Happy New Year from the Governor, and we thank him," – Jim Nolan.

December 27, 2005 – Natural gas bills for NorthWestern Energy customers are 40% higher this winter than they were last year. This is projected to mean a record number of applications to the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP).

After Congress failed to increase funding levels, Governor Brian Schweitzer ordered \$2.5 million of one-time state funds to be spent to supplement the state's home heating assistance for Montanans this winter. Montana's Indian tribes will get \$437,000 of the \$2.5 million, while the remaining \$2.063 million will go to the state-run LIEAP. "Many in our state are facing a crisis as our Montana winter gets colder," Governor Schweitzer said. "We understand the need to take care of our Montana families, and I am committed to helping folks stay warm in their homes this winter."

- **Mountain Home's New Enterprise**

Missoula's Mountain Home, a transitional living center for pregnant and parenting teens, has opened a job training and program revenue business. It will be open Monday-Friday from 6:00 a.m. until noon! The *Mocha Mamas Coffee Shop* is a drive-through espresso stand at 2606 South Avenue West (across from Community Medical Center). For more information, contact Gypsy Ray at gypsyray@blackfoot.net.

- **State Children's Health Insurance Plan Expands**

The state health department is increasing the number of children who can get free or low-cost health insurance through the Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP). The state hopes to increase enrollment in CHIP by 2,000 over the next year, according to Joan Miles, Director of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). Currently, about 12,000 children are enrolled in the popular program. The CHIP expansion is possible because of increased funding by the 2005 Legislature and by voters who approved a cigarette tax increase in 2004 and designated part of it for CHIP. In addition, Gov. Brian Schweitzer has made providing health insurance to children a priority of his administration.

Under the new guidelines, a family of three with an annual household income of \$24,135 or a family of four with an annual household income of \$29,025 may be eligible for CHIP. The income level may even be higher for some families, depending on the number of family members working and how much they pay for child care. DPHHS recently introduced a shorter and simpler CHIP application. Applications are available at local public health departments, Offices of Public Assistance, community health centers, Head Start locations, Indian Health Services and Tribal Clinics, as well as at participating hospitals and doctors' offices. The application and more information about CHIP are also available online at www.chip.mt.gov or by calling the CHIP family hotline, toll-free, at 1-877-543-7669.

What the Research Says

- **The Impact of Child Maltreatment on Adult Income and Employment**

The effects of child abuse and neglect often last far into adulthood, and research has shown that there can even be socioeconomic impact for some adults abused as children. In the July 2005 issue of "Policy Matters," D. S. Zielinski discusses some of these repercussions:

- 20% of unemployed adults report having been abused or neglected as children, compared to 13% of employed adults.
- Child maltreatment victims are more than twice as likely as their non-maltreated peers to fall below the Federal poverty level as adults.
 - This group is also likely to complete less schooling than their peers.

- Female victims of physical and sexual abuse are significantly more likely to use Medicaid than other adults.

The article, "*Long-Term Socioeconomic Impact of Child Abuse and Neglect: Implications for Public Policy*," is available on-line at the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University:

www-pps.aas.duke.edu/centers/child/Publications/ImpactofAbuse-DZielinski.pdf

- **Report on Performance Measurement**

Measuring the Performance of Programs that Serve Homeless People is a report that examines the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s performance measures for the Supportive Housing Program, Shelter Plus Care, Single Room Occupancy Moderate Rehabilitation for the Homeless and Emergency Shelter Grants programs, which are funded by McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants. The report discusses the weaknesses and strengths of HUD's current measures and identifies opportunities for improving these measures. A PDF of the report is available on the Alliance website at

www.endhomelessness.org/pub/toolkit/MeasuringPerformanceofProgramsthatServeHomeless9.6.pdf

- **Homelessness and the Child Welfare System:** The intersection of poor housing, homelessness, and child welfare involvement was the subject of a forum held by the National Housing Conference on December 2. A panel provided an overview of research that demonstrates the relationship between involvement in child welfare agencies and homelessness. Speakers noted that children in families who experience homelessness are more likely to be removed from families and placed into foster care than children in other low-income families. Further, that young people exiting foster care have high rates of homelessness.

A common theme was the importance of affordable housing. The Family Unification Program (FUP) is a program connects housing subsidies and services for child welfare involved families and youth exiting care. Public housing authorities (PHAs) administer the housing voucher and the child welfare agency provides the services. An evaluation of the program found that 85% of homeless or families at-risk of homelessness who participated in the FUP program remained housed 12 months later. More importantly, 90% of families in which the children were at risk of placement into foster care remained together while 62% of families that had a child or children in care were reunified. A copy of a PowerPoint presentation by Debra Rog providing an overview of research on homeless families and their heightened risk of separation is available on the National Alliance for Ending Homelessness at <http://www.naeh.org/back/housingconferencechildwelfare.pdf>

Great Data

- **Number of Homeless Children Enrolled in Montana's Public Schools, School Year 2003-2004:** 2,320. Source: U.S. Department of Education. Limited to children enrolled in public schools. (Generally reflects children at one point in time and not the full number ever homeless during the year.) <http://www.cbpp.org/11-21-05pov.pdf>
- **2005 Population Estimates:** The U.S. Census Bureau released the 2005 population estimates for all states. Included in this release are revised estimates for 2000

through 2004, as well as components of change (births, deaths, international and internal migration). Montana, with an estimated population of 935,670, continues to rank as the 44th most populous state in the nation with a 3.7 percent growth rate between 2000 and 2005. To access the latest files, visit CEIC's web site at <http://ceic.mt.gov/EstimatesStatePop.htm>.

- **Hardship Indicators:** This analysis features a variety of measures suggesting that tens of millions of American families will confront significant hardships this holiday season, with many unable to meet their basic food, health, and shelter needs. Government data show that:
 - ♦ Poverty has now risen for four straight years; 37 million people were poor in 2004.
 - ♦ More than one in six households with children experienced hunger or risk of hunger in 2004.
 - ♦ The number of people lacking health insurance reached an all-time recorded high in 2004. Access the report at: <http://www.cbpp.org/11-21-05pov.pdf>
- **Detailed Area Profiles** are available at the MDOC CEIC website has both 34-page and 58-page Detailed Profiles -- for the State, for Counties, for Places for Reservations and for Census Tracts in PDF format at: ceic.commerce.state.mt.us/detailed_profiles.htm
- **The 2004 Consolidate Federal Funds Report (CFFR)** by the U.S. Census Bureau provides the only consolidated source of data on the geographic distribution of federal expenditures. The data cover direct payments, grants, procurement awards, and salaries and wages, by federal agency and program, for state and county areas of the United States. The 2004 fiscal year report includes expenditures for the Department of Homeland Security, the first full year that this data has been included. To access the full PDF file or use the Census Bureau's on-line query system to select by geography, agency or program, visit CEIC's web site at <http://ceic.mt.gov/cbep.htm>.
- **Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates:** The Census Bureau recently released Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) for 2003. These data include estimates of population and poverty for school districts, as well as income and poverty estimates for states and counties. Includes all ages in poverty, age 0-17 in poverty, age 5-17 in families in poverty, under age 5 in poverty and median household income. To access this information, go to CEIC's web site at <http://ceic.mt.gov/demographics.htm> .
- **KnowledgePlex Introduces DataPlace™**
KnowledgePlex recently launched DataPlace (www.dataplace.org), a free online resource for housing and demographic statistics about communities, regions and the nation. With the new tool you can look up demographic, economic, housing, and mortgage lending data from the decennial census, Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, Section 8 Expiring Use and other data sets. Display key statistics on any location in the United States in colorful, customizable maps, charts, tables and rankings.
- **Online Calculator Compares Owning And Renting:** Given the user's expected purchase costs and other data, the Center for Economic and Policy Research calculator determines the net costs of owning and renting. The user must select a

specific location; some small cities are included, though many rural areas are not. Visit <http://www.cepr.net/calculators/hb/hcc.html>.

Reentry

- **Advocacy Toolkits Available to Fight Criminal Record Discrimination**
People with criminal records face a daunting array of counterproductive, debilitating legal barriers that make it difficult to succeed. The Legal Action Center's groundbreaking report, *After Prison: Roadblocks to Reentry* (<http://www.lac.org/lac/>), documents and grades each state on the legal obstacles that people with criminal records face as they seek to become fully productive members of society and recommends legislative and policy changes to remove those roadblocks. The Legal Action Center and the National H.I.R.E. Network have constructed and posted a series of toolkits that organizations and individuals can use to advocate for removal of unfair roadblocks facing individuals with criminal records. To access the toolkits, visit the Legal Action Center at www.lac.org.
- **Reentry Research In Action**
The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) Multi-site Evaluation has made two briefs based on the results of the recently completed SVORI Program Director Survey available on-line at <http://www.svori-evaluation.org>. The first brief discusses the role faith-based organizations play in SVORI and the second brief highlights the general program characteristics of reentry programs funded by SVORI. These Reentry Research In Action briefs are the first in a series of reports which will document findings of the SVORI Multi-site Evaluation. For more information, visit the evaluation website or email svori@rti.org.
- **Prisoner Reentry: Facing the Challenges of Returning Home**
A comprehensive, 60-page document that lists articles and resources relative to the challenges and best practices for prisoner reentry. compiled by the National Criminal Justice Reference Service.
<http://www.innovations.harvard.edu/cache/documents/9413.pdf>
- **Urban Institute Articles on Prisoner Reentry**
The Urban Institute website includes several articles of interest regarding prisoner reentry programs, studies and other information related to this population. Add it to you bookmarks for new ideas on how to develop solutions here in Montana. We really don't have to reinvent the wheel. Take a look at: <http://www.urban.org/publications/900744.html> for a specific study on a Reentry Mapping Network and then at this site for multiple articles and reports: <http://www.urban.org/expert.cfm?ID=TheUrbanInstitute>

Trauma

- **Intimate Partner Violence Fact Sheet**
The Centers for Disease Control's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control presents a 10 page fact sheet about intimate partner violence. Some interesting facts from this publication:
 - ♦ Most IPV incidents are not reported to the police: about 20% of IPV rapes or

sexual assaults, 25% of physical assaults and 50% of stalkings directed toward women are reported. Even fewer IPV incidents against men are reported.

- ♦ 85% of IPV victims were women.
 - ♦ Most at risk are American Indian/Alaskan Native women and men, African-American women, and Hispanic women.
 - ♦ Young women and those below the poverty line are disproportionately victims of IPV. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm>
- **Trauma and Children: An Introduction for Foster Parents**
The latest issue of *Fostering Perspectives*, a North Carolina newsletter for foster care parents, is devoted to trauma and children. The newsletter defines trauma, its causes, and children's reactions to traumatic events. It offers foster parents suggestions on what they can do, and concludes with a smattering of resources on the subject. http://ssw.unc.edu/fcrp/fp/fp_v10n1/trauma.htm

Poverty

- **Why is U.S. Poverty Higher in Rural Areas?**
A Rural Poverty Research Center paper concludes that the higher nonmetro poverty rate partly reflects a concentration of people with characteristics (low education and others) associated with poverty, who may have chosen to move to rural places or remain there. The author notes that factors may vary in different rural areas. Why is U.S. Poverty Higher in Nonmetropolitan Areas? is on-line at <http://www.rprconline.org/WorkingPapers/WP0504.pdf>.
- **Latest Census Data Shows More Children Living in Poverty (9/29/2005):** The poverty rate for children younger than 18 in the United States is rising, jumping from 16.1% in 2000 to 17.8% in 2004, according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty04.html>
- **Kaiser Family Foundation Updates Database of State Medicaid Benefits**
The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured offers a *Medicaid Benefits: Online Database* with easily accessible, state-by-state information on Medicaid service coverage. The database includes information on 46 different services including benefit coverage, required co-payments (if any), and eligibility limitations. The database is searchable by state and benefit, and users can compare states by region. Access the database at <http://www.kff.org/medicaid/benefits>.

Access to Mainstream Resources

- **One-Stop Website for Government Resources:** The Department of Labor announced the launch of a website designed to serve as a one-stop resource for all government benefits. With benefits programs from participating Federal agencies and state organizations, GovBenefits is the most comprehensive online resource for government-to-citizen assistance programs available. The website lists benefits by state, category, and features a detailed resource page. For more about this new site, please see: <http://www.govbenefits.gov/govbenefits/index.jhtml>
- **Making the Most of HMIS Data: A Guide to Understanding Homelessness and Improving Programs in Your Community and Technical Guidelines for**

[Unduplicating and De-identifying HMIS Client Records](#). These documents provide insight, examples and strategies for preparing HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) data for analysis. Both documents provide practical application of research methods and technical specifications for unduplication of client data to generate accurate results about the extent and nature of homelessness. Visit: www.hmis.info/ta_resources_data.asp?topic_id=9.

- [Some Montanans May Qualify for More Food Stamps](#)

Some former Montana food-stamp recipients may now be eligible for an additional three months of benefits, according to Hank Hudson, who oversees the food stamp program for the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. To find out if they're eligible, people should contact their local Office of Public Assistance. Food stamps are governed by a 1996 federal law that allows only three months of benefits in a three-year period to anyone who is considered to be an "able-bodied adult without dependents," Hudson explained. Under the law, states can choose to eliminate the time limits in counties with high unemployment rates. The time limits also can be waived for individuals who are either employed 20 hours a week, physically unable to work, age 50 or older, or age 17 or younger. In Montana, 20 counties and all seven Indian reservations are exempt from the three-month time limits for able-bodied adults without dependents, Hudson said.

Each year, about 80,000 low-income Montanans are able to eat a more nutritious diet by supplementing their food budget with food stamps, Hudson said. Income, resources, and household size determine the amount of food stamps a household can get. For more information about the food stamp program, visit www.dphhs.mt.gov. Click on Programs and Services, then Public Assistance.

- [The National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse](#), a national consumer technical assistance center funded by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, has launched a Directory of Consumer-Driven Services (CDS) at <http://www.cdsdirectory.org>. The directory provides consumers, social scientists and service-providers with essential resources on CDS, including background materials, contact information, pertinent research findings and multiple technical assistance resources and CDS-related materials.
- [Using Medicaid to Support Working Age Adults with Serious Mental Illnesses in the Community: A Handbook](#): This resource includes a useful index that allows the user to find information on funding services such as supported employment, peer support, evidence-based practice, consumer-directed services, supportive housing, family psycho-education, and other topics. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/daltcp/reports/handbook.pdf>
- [New and Improved Medicare/Medicaid Services Website](#)
The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced the new and improved CMS website located at www.cms.hhs.gov.

Legislative Updates

- [Get Legislative Updates](#): Want the latest news about how the work on Capitol Hill is impacting children and families? The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) provides legislative alerts at <http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/alerts.htm>. View breaking

news, advocacy information, and timely details about the latest legislative news.

- *The Human Needs Report: Coalition on Human Needs*
This newsletter deals with national policy issues affecting low-income and vulnerable populations. It is published every other week while Congress is in session. Sign up at www.democracyinaction.org/chn/signUp.jsp

Housing

- *Worst Case Needs*: One-fourth of very low-income rural renters (with incomes below 50% of area median) have worst case housing needs. Nationwide, 77% of worst case needs households have extremely low incomes (below 30% of area median). *Affordable Housing Needs: A Report to Congress on the Significant Need for Housing* is free at <http://www.huduser.org/publications/affhsg/affhsgneed.html>.
- *Housing Costs Remain out of Reach for Many*: The National Low Income Housing Coalition's annual Out of Reach report shows that a full-time minimum wage worker cannot afford a one-bedroom apartment anywhere in the country. The report and interactive data for states and counties are free at <http://www.nlihc.org/oor2005>.
- *Housing Assistance Eases Welfare-to-Work Transition*: A new publication examines state housing aid to rural welfare leavers and how it can help overcome barriers to self-sufficiency. *EASING THE TRANSITION: HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR RURAL TANF RECIPIENTS* is free on-line at <http://www.ruralhome.org/>
- *Out of Reach 2004*: National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) annual report on housing affordability in every jurisdiction in the country. <http://www.nlihc.org/>
- *The Family Permanent Supportive Housing Initiative: Family History and Experiences in Supportive Housing*: Families in permanent supportive housing maintain residential stability although they continue to struggle with economic issues and the effects of prior episodes of homelessness and addiction. One hundred mothers living in supportive housing in San Francisco were interviewed for the report. Two thirds of mothers interviewed were not working primarily because of disabilities, illnesses, lack of skills and family responsibilities. Having enough food to eat (63 percent) and difficulty paying rent (49 percent) were major concerns for the families. Nevertheless, they reported living much more stably than prior to moving into supportive housing. For example, at the time of interview, families averaged 2.2 years at their current residence; prior to entering supportive housing mothers reported living in an average of 3.5 different types of places. For a copy of the report, see: <http://www.urban.org/urlprint.cfm?ID=9402>

Funding Opportunities

- *GREAT Gang Prevention Funding*
The federal Bureau of Justice Assistance will award grants of up to \$250,000 under its 2006 Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) Program. Applications are due February 2, 2006 for the grants, which support delivery of anti-gang involvement,

violence prevention and positive life-skills programs for middle-school students. Similar to DARE, the program is delivered by certified law-enforcement officers, usually in a classroom setting. Governments and schools may apply for funding. For more information, see the GREAT website or the full request for applications online in PDF format: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/06GREATsol.pdf>

- [Homeless Outreach Projects and Evaluation \(HOPE\)](#)

As authorized under Section 1110 of the Social Security Act, the Social Security Administration (SSA) seeks applications from public and private organizations, including non-profit, profit-making, and faith-based organizations, to demonstrate methods to improve the quality of assistance that medical and social service providers give to homeless individuals who file claims for Social Security benefits. Announcement details are available at www.grants.gov. Funding Opportunity Number SSA-OAG-06-1. Award ceiling: \$100,000. Due date: January 31, 2006.

- [Building Rural Communities](#)

The **Montana Community Foundation** is accepting applications for a new grant program, *Building Rural Communities*. This program, funded partially by a grant from the Steele-Reese Foundation, will provide small grants from \$750-\$3,500 in the areas of rural education, welfare, health or humanities. Projects must serve communities of under 5,000 people. The deadline is February 10, 2006. The application form and guidelines will soon be available on-line at www.mtcf.org. For more information or to receive the forms by email, call Cathy Cooney, Program Director, in the Kalispell office at 755-4525 or email her at ccooney@mtcf.org.

- [SAMHSA Conference Grants](#)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is accepting applications from groups interested in running conferences that increase knowledge of addiction treatment and prevention. *SAMHSA's Knowledge Dissemination Conference Grants* are intended to "disseminate knowledge about practices within the mental health services and substance abuse prevention and treatment fields and to integrate that knowledge into real-world practice as effectively and efficiently as possible." No total or individual award amounts have been set. Applications are due Jan. 31, 2006. Governments, schools and nonprofits may apply.

http://www.samhsa.gov/grants/2006/RFA/PA_06_001_Conference.aspx

Dates to Remember

- February 7 – 8: SOAR Stepping Stones to Recovery Training
 - ♦ Billings, Montana – Yellowstone City-County Health Department
- February 22, 2006: Billings Strategic Planning Meeting: 9:30 – 4 p.m.
- February 23, 2006: MTCoh (Billings) 9:30 – 3 p.m.
- March 22 –23: SOAR Stepping Stones to Recovery Training
 - ♦ Billings, Montana – Yellowstone City-County Health Department
 - ♦ For more information, contact Sherrie Downing at Sherrie@MTCoh.org
- April 2006: SOAR Stepping Stones to Recovery Training

The VISTA Corner

Veterans' Stand Downs

By: Marcial Ornelaz

The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) estimates that about one-third of homeless adults nationally have served in the armed services. VA statistics show that on any given day, as many as 200,000 veterans (male and female) are living on the streets or in shelters. (Source: <http://www1.va.gov/homeless/page.cfm?pg=1>) These numbers appear to be lower in Montana. In a point-in-time survey sponsored by the Intergovernmental Human Service Bureau on January 27th, 2005, 299 of the 2,097 documented homeless persons were veterans.

Stand downs are part of an effort to provide services to homeless veterans. The term is used because it described a period when combat troops were allowed to “stand down” from the rigors of constant alert status and the hardship of the battlefield. The event is typically a one to three day event where homeless veterans access food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, Veterans Affairs and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other services. Stand downs are collaborative events, coordinated between local departments of Veterans Affairs, as well as other governmental and community agencies serving the homeless. The first stand down was organized in 1988 by a group of Vietnam veterans in San Diego. Since then, these events have effectively assisted homeless veterans, reaching more than 200,000 veterans and their family members between 1994-2000.

Montana has traditionally had two stand down events. The first Veteran Stand Down in Montana was organized in Libby the first weekend of October 2000 in recognition of homelessness among veterans. More than 1,000 veterans and family members attended. Attendance increased 40 percent in 2001. In September 2001, Billings organized its first Stand Down to provide services to veterans in a one-stop setting. Additionally, the first annual *Hands Up for the Homeless* event was held in Helena in September 2005. The event was modeled after traditional stand downs, but geared to serving a broader audience that included non-veterans.

To find out more about the issues pertaining to Homeless Veterans, visit the U.S. Department on Veterans Affairs webpage at <http://www1.va.gov>. For more information on Homeless Stand Downs, visit the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans webpage at <http://www.nchv.org>.

To join this listserv, e-mail Sherrie@MTCoh.org and write “Join Homeless Listserv” in the subject line. If you have received this e-mail in error or no longer wish to participate in the listserv, e-mail Sherrie@MTCoh.org and write “Cancel Homeless Listserv” in the subject line.